

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 01273

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, EINV, MT
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REPLY TO MINTOFF

REF: (A) STATE 119884, (B) 121131

1. MINTOFF WAS QUICK TO RECEIVE ME WHEN I INFORMED HIS OFFICE THAT I HAD A REPLY TO HIS LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT. I SAW HIM AT NOON TODAY.

2. HE READ THE LETTER AND COMMENTED "THIS IS A VERY NICE LETTER." HE HAD NO SPECIFIC COMMENT OR QUESTION BEYOND THAT.

3. I TOLD HIM THE LETTER WAS AN INTERIM RESPONSE IN THE SENSE THAT I HOPED TO HAVE SOMETHING FURTHER SHORTLY THAT I WOULD CONVEY ORALLY REGARDING THE ORAL REQUEST FOR LOANS FOR MARSAXLOKK. I ASKED WHETHER WE COULD EXPECT TO RECEIVE SOME SORT OF LIST OF THE KIND OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT IN WHICH THEY MIGHT BE INTERESTED. MINTOFF'S RESPONSE SUGGESTED HE HADN'T GIVEN THAT MUCH THOUGHT. HE TALKED RATHER VAGUELY ABOUT AUTOMATED BARGES, LARGE CONCRETE MIXERS, AND EVEN LANDING CRAFT SURPLUS TO OUR MILITARY REQUIREMENTS AND THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL IN BREAKWATER CONSTRUCTION. I TOLD HIM THAT WHEN WE HAD ITEMS LIKE LANDING CRAFT TO DISPOSE OF WE USUALLY SOLD THEM OR LENT THEM TO COUNTRIES WHO NEEDED THEM FOR THEIR ORIGINAL PURPOSE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VALLET 01273 121748Z

THIS EXCHANGE ENDED WITH HIS SAYING THAT HE WOULD GIVE US AN INDICATION OF MORE SPECIFIC INTERESTS LATER.

4. IN THIS CONNECTION, MINTOFF REFERRED AT ONE POINT TO A VISIT HERE A WEEK OR TWO AGO BY TWO AMERICAN CITIZENS SENT AS CONSULTANTS FROM UNDP TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE MARSAXLOKK PROJECT. HIS SECRETARY PRODUCED THE NAMES OF HARRY CHOI

AND A MR. (FNU) BOUCHARD. HE DESCRIBED THEIR REACTIDN TO MARSAXLOKK AS "ENTHUSIASTIC" AND SAID THEY HAD OFFERED PERSONALLY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH U.S. FIRMS WHO WOULD BE THE TYPE INTERESTED IN USE OF A TRANSSHIPMENT PROJECT LIKE MARSAXLOKK; E.G. "FIRMS WHO MAKE AND USE TRANSSHIPMENT CONTAINERS." (I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF DEPARTMENT COULD QUERY UNDP ABOUT THIS VISIT. WE UNDERSTAND FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT CHOI IS IN FACT PRESIDENT OF ECONOMIC ASSOCIATES INC. OF WASHINGTON, D.C., AND THAT THE UNDP HAS APPARENTLY SELECTED THIS FIRM TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE MARSAXLOKK PROJECT.)

5. PM DID NOT RAISE THE MATTER OF AMERICAN INVESTMENT IN MALTA, EXCEPT TO OBSERVE AT ONE POINT HE REGRETTED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF A BROWN & ROOT INVESTMENT IN MALTA HAD "DRIED UP." I TOLD THE PM THIS WAS NOT SO, HAVING JUST THIS WEEK HAD A VISIT IN MY OFFICE FROM A MR. NELSON MEYER WHO HAS ARRIVED IN MALTA TO SET UP AN OFFICE FOR BROWN & ROOT TO BEGIN, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, SOME RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN IRAN. WE WERE HOPEFUL THIS WOULD SEE SOME EXPANSION LATER. MINTOFF SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY DIPLOMATS WHO COULD BE OPTIMISTIC.

6. I DID NOT RAISE THE "WHITE PAPER" ON INVESTMENT WHICH I REGRET TO SAY IS PROBABLY INDICATIVE OF REAL FEELINGS IN THE GOM ABOUT US. I WANT TO SEE THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VALLET 01273 121748Z

TO THE HAYES LETTER BEFORE I DO SO, AND THEN I INTEND TO TACKLE EITHER MAURICE ABELA OR THE PM DIRECTLY. THAT IRRITATING PAPER IS RIGHT IN THE SENSE THERE HAS BEEN NO NEW DIRECT U.S. INVESTMENT HERE FOR SOME YEARS OF ANY CONSEQUENCE BUT TOTALLY WRONG IN WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT USG ATTITUDES AND IN WHAT IT DOES NOT SAY ABOUT THE GOM'S OWN POOR RECORD IN ENCOURAGING U.S. INVESTMENT.

7. MINTOFF MADE NO REFERENCE TO THE FRACAS OVER THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR AND THE FELICE MISSION.

8. COMMENT: I AM MUCH APPRECIATIVE OF THE TONE AND CONTENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THE PM IS GENUINE IN SAYING WHAT HE DID ABOUT IT. I WAS READY AND EAGER TO TAKE HIM ON IF HE HAD SAID OTHERWISE. HOWEVER THE REAL TEST IS STILL TO COME IN LIGHT OF WHAT WE SAY ABOUT MARSAXLOKK. LAINGEN

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